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STAFF NOTES:

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

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Iraq-Syria

Saudi Mediation Efforts

25X6 Saudi Arabia will host a tripartite meeting this week with Iraq and Syria in an effort to find a formula to resolve the Euphrates River dispute. The Saudis probably also hope to persuade the two parties to cease their open bickering. Recent [REDACTED] comments by Iraqi strongman Saddam Husayn do not augur well, however, for an early easing of the antagonism that exists between Baghdad and Damascus.

The Iraqi minister of irrigation announced on August 23 upon his return from a visit to Riyadh that representatives of the three countries would hold talks in Taif on the problem of how to apportion Euphrates River water between Syria and Iraq.

25X1C The Saudis have been engaged in efforts to bridge the gap between the two countries on the river issue since the dispute flared up last spring. One of the principal objectives of Prince Fahd's visit to Damascus two weeks ago was to break the Iraqi-Syrian deadlock. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] both the Saudis and the Egyptians were concerned that the open quarrel between Damascus and Baghdad might jeopardize the latest negotiations on Egyptian-Israeli disengagement in Sinai. 25X1C

25X6 The communique issued at the conclusion of Fahd's visit stated that Syria had agreed to a proportional sharing of Euphrates water with Iraq and that an agreement with Baghdad would be signed at a later date. No details of the proposed agreement were given in the communique and Baghdad made no comment. [REDACTED] 25X6

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In the midst of these developments, Iraqi leader Saddam Husayn is continuing his verbal assault against Damascus. He told the Beirut press last weekend that he foresees no prospect of improving relations with Damascus--even if the Syrians decided to meet Iraq's needs for Euphrates water. Earlier this month, he took a tough line in private comments pledging to continue the dispute against Syria by all means short of armed military conflict. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/ NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Mauritania

Government Reorganized

President and party Secretary General Moktar Ould Daddah has announced the reorganization of his government and the appointment of eight new "super ministers" of state who will be expected to implement his version of "Islamic socialism" in Mauritania.

Last Thursday, during a session of the National Council of the Party of the Mauritanian People (PPM), Ould Daddah presented a structural governmental change that in effect merges the executive branch with the party structure. The new "super-ministers" will form the membership of the newly created National Political Bureau (BPN) of the PPM; Ould Daddah contends that this arrangement "puts an end to the duality of party and government and establishes the effective preeminence of the party over all administrative mechanism." Each super-minister has absolute control over his subordinate ministries and the power to instigate and coordinate programs within his domain as a means to smooth the decision-making process.

Although none of the ministers in the former cabinet have been dropped from the government, the appointment of several new and younger sub-ministers--including Mauritania's first female cabinet member--reflect President Ould Daddah's determination to integrate youth and women into the party.

The relatively youthful sub-ministers are technocrats who can be expected to follow Ould Daddah's guidelines on Islamic socialism. According to the US embassy, many conservative Muslims objected to the President's call for socialism during the party congress, arguing that it was tantamount to accepting communism. The embassy notes that Ould Daddah's

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references to Islamic socialism are similar to calls heard in many African countries seeking to create versions of socialism compatible to an African background.

Ould Daddah, after being nominated by the PPM as its candidate for president, made it clear in his acceptance speech that the elder traditional leaders of the country would be expected to accept younger members in the mainstream of government. His reorganization appears to serve that function. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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